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# EVEN IN CAPITALIST GARBAGE CANS, THERE ARE SOCIAL DIVISIONS

NONPOLITICS CLASS STRUGGLE, IMPERIALISM, WAR

Interview with Emilio Minassian, 30 octobre 2023.

You've been interested in what's happening in Palestine for a long time, without being a pro-Palestinian activist. What does a revolution-oriented critic have to say about what's going on there?

I'd say that the first thing is to consider that there aren't two camps, one Palestinian and the other Israeli. These people live in the same state and in the same economy. Within this same entity, let's call it Israeli-Palestinian – but which is entirely under Israel's jurisdiction – social classes not only have different legal statuses based on ethno-religious criteria, but are also “zoned”. The Gaza Strip has gradually become a “prison-reserve” for two million proletarians, who have been relegated to the bangs of Israeli capital. But the latter remains their ultimate master. Gazans use Israeli currency, consume Israeli goods and have Israeli-issued identity papers.

The refugee camps of the West Bank, which could be considered the beating heart of “Palestine”, continue to be suburbs of Tel Aviv. I've spent evenings listening to day laborers from one of these camps recount how the ethnicization of the workforce unfolded on the building sites of Israel's capital: Ashkenazi Jewish developers, 1948 Palestinian contractors for the passage of labor from the Occupied Territories, Sephardic Jewish foremen who also spoke Arabic, and so on. And then there are all the other imported proletarians: the Thais, the Chinese, the Africans, who, as undocumented immigrants, are actually the worst off. None of these can mix, because each group has a distinct status and place in the relations of production. But these worlds are not porous, they are nested, they look at each other, they know each other.

Dozens of Thais working in agriculture around the Gaza Strip have been killed and kidnapped by Hamas. Now, Israeli bosses are withholding the wages of others to force them to work in the war zone. In the context of what is happening in Israel-Palestine, any meaningful social

criticism must also include the point of view of Thai workers. This country doesn't belong to Palestinian proletarians any more than it does to Thai workers.

Isn't it a bit of a cop-out to try and rise above the "national question" in Israel-Palestine?

Israel has succeeded in producing a situation that is unique in the world: the integration of a proletariat that is itself ethnicized ("Jewish") into the state, against the rest of the proletariat, which is also ethnicized ("Arab"). The Israeli state has organized the accumulation of "national" capital in record time; it has organized the importation of a "national" proletariat, and set itself up as the guardian of the latter's existence and reproduction, threatened as it is in its very existence by another ("Palestinian") proletarian fringe. But if we take off the glasses of the phantasmagoria of the "state as guarantor of people's existence", it becomes clear that Israel's Jewish proletariat is a kind of spoils of war in the hands of the state.

This is not the case with the Palestinian proletariat, where the dynamics of struggle have retained a certain autonomy, cohabiting in a complex manner with the instrumental logics of their nationalist political framework.

It may seem counter-intuitive, but I think we have to consider Hamas as Israel's subcontractor for the management of the Gaza Strip's proletariat. As I was saying, the latter, in the final analysis, "comes under" Israeli national capital. As long as the latter has not chosen to authorize the development of another, "Palestinian", capitalist entity alongside it, the Gazan proletariat, even if parked, is included in its circuits. This situation cannot do without an externalized social formation responsible for regulating the inmates – there is no prison without hacks.

What's happening is not an inter-imperialist war. It is essentially an "internal affair", in which the "national" camps are a smokescreen. There is no proletarian struggle at work here. The militarization of antagonisms, produced in concert by Hamas and the Israeli ruling class, produces a "resistance" that contains no logic of autonomous proletarian struggle, even in its infancy.

It is not a war, but a management of the supernumerary proletariat with military means that are those of total war, on the part of a democratic, civilized state belonging to the central bloc of accumulation. These thousands of deaths seem to me to have a particular meaning. They paint a terrifying picture of the future – of the crises of capitalism to come.

But the management of the supernumerary proletariat by means of carpet-bombing, which, in the way it is seen as legitimate by all the central states of the capitalist space, makes what is happening now part of a global offensive. In France, this global character is particularly salient: we've entered a phase where even political formulations behind humanist watchwords are repressed – whenever they might encounter street activity by the dangerous classes. The conflict is not being "imported". It's a global offensive. In this sense, for us in France, the struggle is indeed being waged here, against France. We have our own nation to betray, always, whenever possible.

2.

What does Hamas have to gain from such a situation?

Before October 7, my idea of the situation was as follows. On the one hand, an offensive by the colonial far-right, both to annex the West Bank and to seize the levers of the Israeli state. On the other, two Palestinian state apparatuses, living exclusively on rents, interested only in reproducing themselves as such. I had in mind that these powers were on the defensive, and that what they were preparing for above all was to face a loss of control over the populations in their care, both in Gaza and in the West Bank.

Among my interlocutors in the West Bank, whether left-wing academics or armed sub-proletarians, everyone told me a few months ago: “ Hamas doesn’t support the resistance on the ground. It thinks of its own interests.”

And indeed, Hamas has not behaved as a fighting organization, but as a military structure, as a state. But what’s special about its operation is that it necessarily contained the prospect of an Israeli riposte, against which it would be in a situation of imposing inferiority. Hamas behaves like a state, but without the means of one, and sacrifices part of the interests of part of its apparatus and social base in Gaza, in the hope of having more in the future. Many of its leaders will lose their lives in the process.

The October 7 operation is an astonishing act on the part of a ruling class, but one that can be explained above all, I believe, by the contradictions running through Hamas itself. It’s a hypothesis, but it’s not inconceivable that the October 7 operation was conceived by the armed wing of Hamas, without much consultation with the political leadership. (It’s also conceivable that the scale of the breach in the wall surprised the designers of the attack themselves, who may have been seeking to carry out a kind of suicide operation, without expecting such a major Israeli military collapse, which opened the door to large-scale massacres).

The Hamas operation is in no way a fanatical millenarian delusion. It’s a risky gamble, but one that could pay off. Israel’s options are limited. There is the path of negotiation, that of regional war and not much in between. But it’s still a gamble, because it’s not certain that the Israeli state and capital will opt for stabilization.

In any case, the “massacre” stage, with its carpet of graves, is inevitable, but that’s another question, and it’s of no concern to the leaders, of course.

You say that Hamas behaves like a state, but without the means to do so. You also say that if it sacrifices some of its interests, it does so in order to have more later on. Could you be more specific?

Simply to be recognized within the framework of negotiations. Certainly not with a view to a peace agreement, we’re not there yet and, in reality, I don’t think either Hamas or Israel have any interest in a comprehensive agreement. But the eradication of Hamas, from the Israeli point of view, is not a serious possibility. By demonstrating its military capability, Hamas is seeking to establish itself as a key player in the regional balance of power.

The failure to resume negotiations between Iran and the United States in recent years shows that this is no time for “solutions”. For Hamas, as everyone says, it’s a question of blocking the American solution of an Israel-Saudi agreement. What Hamas stands to gain is, first and foremost, to establish itself as an interlocutor with the Arab countries of the region, and to

continue marginalizing the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization, to which Fatah belongs, but also the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)] in the West Bank and Lebanon. It means conquering small markets of Palestinian representation to the detriment of its PLO competitor.

Are the interests at stake really so narrow?

I'm not sure how to answer that question. Of course, this military operation and the war it is triggering must also be seen in a global context, where the channels of capitalist regulation are breaking down.

I believe that war is always an attempt to resolve the crisis of capitalist valorization, as an operation of de-accumulation. But it is also an expression of the upheaval of the equilibrium that presides over the state-capital relationship. It is a moment of crisis when the control of capital, of global capital, over the State loosens, to the benefit of the monopolization of the State by particular capitalist sectors, or even clans and politicians. The war between capitalists is not just a war between imperialisms. It pits multiple actors against each other, who, in the absence of safeguards, will sometimes make risky bets, playing a card to try and take advantage of an upheaval in the forces at play. This is the kind of spiral we've been witnessing since the war in Ukraine. Frozen fronts are reawakening: we've had Karabagh, now it's Gaza.

Staffs are moving forward, trying out plans, testing resistance, jumping in. It's what they spontaneously want to do, all the time. What has surprised us over the past two years is the extent to which the safeguards holding them back seem to be breaking down.

What is the nature of Hamas' domination over the people of Gaza? How does it consolidate its power; what gains do its leaders derive from it; what links (open or otherwise) do they maintain with Israel?

Hamas is a movement descended from the Muslim Brotherhood. As in most parts of the Arab world, it developed in the 1970s and 1980s among the Palestinian petty bourgeoisie, both in the Territories and in the diaspora. Since its entry into the struggle against Israel during the first Intifada, this social base has broadened to include more proletarian segments, before the control and militarization of the territory of Gaza profoundly changed its nature. It found itself, as we said, in the position of a state apparatus, with the need to integrate many diverse and antagonistic categorical interests, to juggle between them, to arbitrate them. At the same time, since Gaza is not a real state, Hamas has also transformed itself into a militia party, comparable to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

This dual evolution has a contradictory dimension. I hypothesize that the current war marks, in a way, the victory of the second logic over the first. The armed wing has prevailed over the state apparatus; military rentier circuits (from Iran) have prevailed over civilian rentier circuits (from Qatar).

Hamas is a cross-classist movement, which explains its erratic movements. In the mid-2000s, the West Bank's commercial bourgeoisie came to identify with it on a massive scale: the movement won the 2006 legislative elections as the party of order, promising to put an end to the security chaos, silence the guns, fight corruption and develop a probity state apparatus,

ensuring social order, with social redistribution based on charity. Paradoxically, it appeared to be the anti-Intifada party, and the majority of notables in the West Bank's two economic centers, Nablus and Hebron, sided with it at the time, while remaining linked to Jordanian economic interests. Hamas won the same legislative elections in Gaza, but with the slogans of resistance and military recruitment aimed at the lumpenproletariat of the refugee camps. The logic was not one of uprising or social movement, but of military clientelism. Unlike the West Bank, there is no urban merchant bourgeoisie in Gaza.

Since then, interclassism has not exploded. Hamas continues to manipulate opposing mobilization logics. The head of its armed wing, Mohammad Deif, is a kind of mythical icon, a survivor of numerous targeted assassination attempts. He is dressed as James Bond to talk to teenagers in refugee camps, while leaders in suits hang out in 5-star hotels in Qatar and eat all sorts of goodies with ministers and capitalists from the Arab and Turkish worlds. And if it's the Mohammad Deif fringe that launches an operation like the one on October 7, the suit-and-tie fringe lets it happen because it harbors secret hopes of reaping the rewards in diplomatic corridors.

I'm more circumspect about what the comprador bourgeoisie of Gaza-city thinks, as its villas are razed to the ground by bombs.

What are the characteristics of the exploitation of proletarians in Gaza?

I've spent a lot of time in the West Bank, but I don't know the Gaza Strip directly. Because of its political and geographical situation, stuck to a space of intense capitalist accumulation, you could say that Gaza is one of Israel's big "dustbins". But even in capitalist garbage cans, there are social divisions.

In short, it's a kind of ghetto? In concrete terms, do Gazan proletarians have jobs (formal or otherwise), or should we consider most of them supernumeraries?

"Supernumerary", in the sense that work in Gaza allows for almost no capitalist accumulation. The capital that circulates in Gaza comes essentially from rents (and even then, they're very small rents): rents from foreign aid (Iran and Qatar), rents from monopoly situations (the tunnels). Profits are not generated by the exploitation of labor by capitalists. The reproduction of proletarians and valorization are two distinct processes, as the other would say. The overwhelming majority of bosses are small and the state does not regulate anything.

Gaza is a space completely outside the circuits of capitalist valorization, like many other peripheries around the world. There is no "national bourgeoisie", because there is no Gazan capital. Nor is there a "traditional bourgeoisie" as in the West Bank or Jerusalem – those old families based on dusty but still efficient market and land capital in social relations. In Gaza, on the other hand, there is a new form of "comprador" bourgeoisie, based on circulation rents. This is not a class in the strict sense, but a social formation that derives massive income from its position as an intermediary in trade with foreign capitalists (as opposed to a bourgeoisie with interests in the development of the national economy).

Part of this bourgeoisie coincides with the political apparatus of Hamas, as the capital that circulates is largely derived from rents of a geopolitical nature, coming from states such as Qatar or Iran. But there are other rents too, linked to border traffic with Egypt, for example.

Fortunes have been built around smuggling tunnels, and here we're more in the realm of the globalized feudal – typically a boss-labor relationship. In 2007, there were intense armed clashes between clan-based social formations and the political-military apparatus of Hamas in Rafah, in the south of the strip, over the taxation of the movement of goods.

Hamas, unlike the Palestinian Authority (PA), is not in charge of public services, nor does it pay salaries: these are always borne by the PA. The PA regularly cuts or reduces the salaries of Gaza civil servants to weaken Hamas.

Regularly too, and no doubt partly as a result, there are “social” mobilizations demanding dignity – typically water, electricity and salaries. Hamas suppresses them, more or less violently, but with a certain restraint that suggests it is careful not to add fuel to the fire. The current military offensive follows a similar episode this summer. One can easily imagine that there is a link, or at least a logic, linking these two types of events.

Challenging Hamas as manager and supporting Hamas as fighter are not at all antagonistic. The former attacks your dignity, while the latter avenges it. Without Hamas-combatant, Hamas-manager would undoubtedly have to face greater protest in Gaza.

You say you “know” the West Bank better than Gaza. Are there major differences between these two territories, or are we witnessing two variants of the same logic?

The Gaza Strip has long been the “dustbin” of supernumeraries I mentioned earlier. A tiny territory to which a flood of refugees was pushed in 1947-1948, swamping the local, mainly peasant population. There are no resources there. In the West Bank, the class structure is different, with towns and notables. And there are agricultural and water resources, which Israel is monopolizing. Wages are twice as high, and there are a few industries, based on relative integration between the PA comprador class and Israeli capital. Fatah, which governs the cities, is a party that no longer has any social coherence. In 2006, it lost the elections to Hamas. In 2007, it staged a coup, supported by Israel and the United States, to retain the levers of public power in the West Bank cities, “abandoning” Gaza to Hamas. Since then, he has had no legitimacy based on any form of democratic procedure. Its power is based on cooperation with Israel, concealed behind hollow-sounding nationalist rhetoric. He governs separate enclaves, increasingly encircled by settlements, into which the Israeli army regularly penetrates. As for the West Bank proletariat, it is more closely integrated with Israeli capital than that of Gaza. Many Palestinian workers from the West Bank work, legally or illegally, on Israeli territory or in the settlements. They have economic ties with the Palestinians of 1948, who have Israeli citizenship; they often speak Hebrew.

What's happening in the West Bank at the moment? What is Fatah doing? Are there any social or political forces of a more or less proletarian nature, which could be strengthened in the moment of crisis?

The Gaza Strip seems to me to be lost for the moment in terms of possible proletarian activity. The situation is different in the cities of the West Bank, where the inter-Palestinian struggle for political control has been going on for years, with autonomous manifestations of class struggle. Social control is ensured jointly by a security apparatus run by comprador capitalists dependent on Israel and urban baronies linked to Jordan. The coherence of this class

continues to disintegrate, Fatah no longer regulates anything, and everyone is trying to carve out their own fiefdom at the expense of the others. The expected event that was supposed to clarify all this was the death of the paranoid dinosaur Mahmoud Abbas, but things are bound to accelerate.

Hamas has been dormant in the West Bank for fifteen years. No direct public or military activity. It maintains loyalties, but discreetly. The armed groups that have reappeared in the North (Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem) have no links with Hamas. This passivity gave the impression that Hamas had accepted the situation and did not want to break the status quo. Among the armed groups in the refugee camps, this gave Hamas a bad name: it was the flip side of Fatah, all talk and no action, with political interests separate from those of the people. And now, with this operation, the situation has clearly changed in terms of perception. Whether we like it or not, it's going to do a world of good. Already, the Hamas flag is being waved everywhere in demonstrations, something that would have been unimaginable a month ago. Will Hamas directly challenge the PA for power in the West Bank? It's unlikely, since its activities are closely monitored not only by the PA but also by Israel, and since the Palestinian enclaves in the West Bank do not form a coherent territory, it cannot be held militarily without negotiating the matter with the Israeli army. But it can change its strategy, supporting the activities of armed groups in one way or another.

Whatever happens, things are bound to change. The PA will find it difficult to maintain its security hold. The coherence of the political-security class will be severely tested.

In parallel with the Gaza offensive, the army and settlers have launched a series of attacks in the West Bank. This offensive will intensify, with its share of massacres, more limited than in Gaza, but also undoubtedly more "self-organized".

Yet I feel a certain excitement at the idea that the leaden blanket of repression and immobility produced by the PA over the last 15-20 years will be swept away, and that the collapse of the police will enable the social explosion so long awaited. Class relations in the West Bank are exceptionally violent. For a long time, the West Bank bourgeoisie has benefited from the cooperative relationship with Israel.

For some time now, there has been social protest in Israel, against Netanyahu and in particular his reform of the justice system. What consequences do these struggles have (if any) in the current situation? To what extent do the "civil" resistances of the Israeli population (e.g. the recent struggles against justice reform) express such aspirations?

War also seems to me to be a symptom of the capitalist class's loss of coherence; and at the same time, military unity comes to conceal this loss of coherence. Israel's military collapse on October 7 seems to be largely the result of the struggle that runs through the Israeli capitalist class and which, for the first time, has reached the military establishment. In recent months, the struggle has been intense and has spilled over into the streets. The old Israel, Ashkenazi, bourgeois, secular and military, which accumulates vertically in Tel Aviv, has clashed with the extreme right in power, Sephardic, revanchist and which accumulates horizontally in the hills of the West Bank. But nothing proletarian ever spilled over from these demonstrations. Worse: nothing democratic, in the "civil" sense, as you put it. The proletariat in Israel, despite suffering a high level of exploitation, is muzzled by its existential integration into the military state.

The warlike National Unity temporarily sweeps this struggle within the Israeli ruling class under the carpet: everyone agrees that Gaza should be drowned under a carpet of bombs, and that a security blanket should be established. Since the general mobilization, the hunt is on for the enemy within. It concerns the handful of leftists who remain, but also and above all the Muslim proletariat (the Palestinians of 1948), whose slightest gesture of solidarity towards the victims of indiscriminate bombing is hunted down. What will happen in a few months' time? Will the war lead to an alignment of the ruling class with the settlers' party? Although the majority of the bourgeoisie despises this party for its religious backwardness, it is nonetheless the one most in tune with the mobilization to hunt down Arabs, which is unlikely to end anytime soon.

3.

Do you think that the purely colonial analytical grid is effective in defining relations between Israel and the Palestinian proletariat?

Yes and no, obviously.

We're in a situation where what's at stake is less the exploitation of an indigenous workforce than the management of a surplus proletarian population, in proportions that are unique among centers of capitalist accumulation. For every worker with a contract of employment in Israel, there is another maintained in one of the great closed suburbs that make up the centers of settlement under Palestinian jurisdiction: the Gaza Strip and the cities of the West Bank. That's nearly five million proletarians, parked just a few kilometers from Tel Aviv, invisible, living off the sale of their labor power from day to day, guarded by soldiers who make sure they never leave their cages.

This great confinement, this operation of separation between useful proletarians and supernumerary proletarians on an ethnic-religious basis, began at the same time as the peace process, which was in reality a process of externalization of the social control of the supernumeraries. Previously, in the 1970s and 1980s, Palestinians were massively employed by Israeli capital.

In this sense, the term "colonial" is somewhat inappropriate to designate the social relationship that has prevailed since the early 1990s in Israel-Palestine. It also has the disadvantage of entrenching an opposition between two national formations, which are in fact produced and reproduced together. Palestinian and Israeli workers are segments of the same whole. What has been going on since October 7 must be seen as a negotiation through violence between the Gazan subcontractor and his Israeli employer. In this sense, it must be clearly distinguished from the struggle of Palestinian proletarians, against which Hamas and PA subcontractors are on the front line. A struggle that has never ceased, but to which the nationalist embrigade is going to deal a heavy blow, at least in Gaza.

Beyond any moral considerations, the term "resistance", which refers to the colonial imagination, seems to me inappropriate to designate the military operation of October 7: the interests of Hamas are not those of the proletarians, they are not those – to use the current term – of the "Palestinian people". Whatever the outcome of these negotiations, the proletarians of Gaza will be the ones sacrificed – they already are. Right now, if Israel felt



compelled to get rid of its subcontractor, it would have to feel compelled to get rid of its Gazan supernumerary proletarians. You can't have one without the other.

But on the other hand, I don't think we can do without an analytical grid based on the colonial era.

Israel has inherited the European logic of "animalizing" the workforce on the basis of racial criteria, drawing a barrier between the civilized and pre-civilized worlds. This paradigm is in full swing in Israel, and in an assumed way. At present, the Gazans are being massacred according to this logic: they are being drowned under bombs with no other political objective than to "calm" them, to remind them of the hierarchy that separates human groups in this part of the world. A dog bites, the pack is slaughtered.

It's important to remember that the boundaries between the civilized and the animal are fluid. They have been, and remain, active within Israeli Jewish citizenship itself. For a long time, Arab Jews (mizrahis) and Ethiopian Jews (fallashas) were on the wrong side of the fence, acting as a kind of native auxiliary to appease other natives.

The colonial, as a legacy of the colonial period proper, generates a kind of "drive" economy around which the construction of social categories is woven – and this is just the crude image of what's happening throughout the "fortress" constituted by the central countries of capitalist accumulation, as seen with the immediate transfer of the "war of civilization" to France.

The current dynamic, and its logic of hoarding surplus proletarians, carries a torrent of affects built on humiliation. Faced with the impossibility of collectively intervening in the social relationship, powerlessness produces a dual logic of resentment: a search for recognition on the one hand, and revenge on the other.

It's because they have no bourgeoisie to rely on, no proletariat to exploit themselves, that politicians like those of Hamas are led to rely on the exploitation of these affects, of which they become the embodiment – for want of anything better, for want of anything more.

Coming back to Israel, if we consider that capitalist accumulation is largely based on the permanent "war economy" + land appropriation + exploitation of the more or less formal Palestinian proletariat, should we consider any "solution" (e.g., "two-state solution") to be resolutely impossible?

From the 1990s onwards, when Israel wanted to get rid of the management of the Palestinian workforce in the Territories, it entrusted it to a subcontractor, the Palestinian Authority. But Israel does not respect the contract that was supposed to lead to a form of symbolic sovereignty. It mistreats its subcontractor. So the subcontractor revolts: it's the second Intifada, which combines a struggle by the PA against its employer and a proletarian struggle on all fronts, against Israel and the subcontractor, but which turns out to be stifled by triangulation. At the end of this historic sequence, the PA's subcontractors split. One mistreated but docile subcontractor in the West Bank; another mistreated and restless subcontractor in Gaza. Hamas may be treated as an enemy, but the fact remains that Israel cannot do without a subcontractor in this context.

Let's take a quick look at this process and its failure. Why didn't the capitalists seize the "peace" that consisted in supporting a Palestinian "national process" in Gaza and the West Bank? What they had in their sights was the opening up of a regional market with the surrounding countries, the possibility of investment in countries with cheap labor. It would have been enough to leave the Authority with the attributes of a rump state, financed at arm's length by external donors, which would have remained a captive market. For me, the answer to this question is not clear-cut. I put forward two hypotheses. The first is that of the weight of "military" capital, supported by the military rent that pours into Israel from the United States. This military capitalism, linked to the high-tech sector, is internationalized over the head of the regional market. The second hypothesis sees the failure of the peace process as part of the great catastrophe that was the United States' attempt to reshape the Middle East in the 2000s. Israel would have maintained itself in the expectation that the flow of capital in the region would be made more fluid by military means, before realizing that it was possible to have subcontracting without having to cede anything to the authorities in place in the Palestinian reserves. This lasted for almost twenty years. In this context, the prospect of opening up new markets in the Arab world (the so-called Abraham agreements, and new pax americana prospects with Saudi Arabia) even emerged, and it is undoubtedly this situation that has just shattered. What became clear on October 7 is that the "butter and butter money" equation is not tenable: we're going to have to deal with the Palestinian jailers of the Palestinian reserves to contain the ghetto-reserves built up on its territory, or get rid of them, which would clearly open a new page in the history of capitalist violence in the countries of the central accumulation bloc. It's not impossible. It just makes you shudder.

Doesn't the idea of a "Palestinian people" override social divisions, even within the dominated classes?

I believe that social critique is first and foremost the production of categories that enable us to think of antagonisms in terms of social contradiction. In a context like that of Israel-Palestine, this may seem like an operation that twists the subjective categories that circulate, and on the basis of which the affects of combat are constructed, on what is perceived as identity.

The idea of the "Palestinian people" as a category opposed to "Israel" is obviously effective in many places: on identity papers, and in most minds, also as a means of legitimizing proletarian struggles.

But the ethnicization of social relations has a history, which is first and foremost that of the ruling classes: it's that of the formation of a Jewish capitalist bourgeoisie to eradicate an Arab feudal-merchant bourgeoisie; the fusion of this bourgeoisie with a military state, and so on. Proletarians find themselves caught up in this ethnicization of antagonisms within the ruling class.

We must never lose sight of the fact that the "Palestinian struggle", including that waged under the banner of Hamas, is first and foremost a struggle waged by the dominant Arab social classes – or those who aspire to invest in them – for their integration into Israeli capital. The interests of the proletariat, while sometimes under the banner of national struggle, are ultimately contradictory to those of their bourgeoisie.

I believe that solidarity should be given not to the “Palestinian resistance”, but to the struggles waged by proletarians against the conditions of existence that are imposed on them. But proletarians fight under the flags available to them. It’s not the flag that’s important, but the struggles themselves. A Palestinian flag, and even a Fatah or Hamas flag, are potentially flags of struggle, which, depending on the context, escape political managers. Incidentally, it’s not because they’re Islamists that we should shit on Hamas, but because it’s a proletariat framing apparatus, a state in the making.

The fact remains that this social critique can sometimes seem incredibly cold and remote from the experience of a struggle that mobilizes other categories. I don’t wear the same hat when talking about dialectical materialism in the cold as I do when the situation unfolds before my eyes, with all its violence, struggles and subjectivities.

In a context so fraught with identifications, doesn’t a materialist critique run the risk of appearing too detached?

It seems to me that, in such a context, the challenge is not to hold a position, but a point of view, a method. A revolutionary point of view consists first and foremost in not allowing ourselves to be blinded by the autonomy of moral categories manipulated by the left. I can think of two such categories that constantly threaten to overwhelm dialectically-oriented thinking in today’s conversations.

The first is the reflex of lament on the theme of “the proletariat isn’t what we’d like it to be”: anti-Semitic Muslim proletarians, racist Jewish proletarians. Apart from the fact that such thinking – which consists in looking at the interiority of the proletarian from an intellectual position – is by nature bourgeois, it is particularly inappropriate in a situation of antagonism where no form of proletarian autonomy is manifesting itself.

What is currently unfolding is a logic of proletarian recruitment, on the one hand, and the pure massacre of supernumerary proletarians, on the other. So, some will long for the good old days when Palestinian political formations (and, presumably, the people themselves) were left-wing. It seems to me that this is idiotic. The ideology of political groups, as long as we consider that they are first and foremost in a struggle for their leaders to establish and reproduce themselves as a ruling class, is secondary. As for methods, I would simply point out, for example, that it was a commando of the DFLP [Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine], a Palestinian formation ideologically of the far left (and linked to elements of the Israeli far left), which committed the massacre of 22 children in a school in Ma’alot in 1974.

A second problematic thought reflex is to allow metaphysics to creep into the analysis. This metaphysical thinking is contained in the idea of repetition, which freezes and stupefies. It is at work in the elaborations around the “massacres of Jews”, but also around the “Palestinian tragedy”. These elaborations, which perhaps develop autonomously in the depths of the psyche, are nonetheless pure products of the way in which bourgeois thought displaces social relations in the sky of ideas.

Let’s leave aside the stories of farce and tragedy: history doesn’t repeat itself: the antagonisms that unfold are always, above all, present-day antagonisms.

The current “war” is in fact a situation of extreme militarization of class warfare. A “land for two

peoples”, such a grid of the situation in Israel-Palestine is absurd. Nowhere in the world does land belong to the people. It belongs to the owners. This may all sound very theoretical, but the very existence of social relations means that this idea of “camps” is returned to those to whom it belongs: the rulers.

The refugee camps in the West Bank, which could be described as the beating heart of “Palestine”, are still suburbs of Tel Aviv. I spent evenings listening to day laborers from one of these camps talk about how the ethnicization of the workforce unfolded on the construction sites of the Israeli capital: the Ashkenazi Jewish builders, the 1948 Palestinian service providers for the passage of workers from the occupied territories, the Sephardic Jewish foremen who also speak Arabic, and so on. Most of them were able to do their jobs, and most of them were able to do their jobs. And then all the other imported proletarians: Thais, Chinese, Africans, who as *sans-papiers* are actually the ones whose situation is the worst. None of this can be mixed up, because each group has its own status and its own place in the relations of production. But these worlds are not porous, they are intertwined, they look at each other and know each other.

Dozens of Thais exploited in agriculture on the outskirts of Gaza were killed and kidnapped by Hamas. Now Israeli bosses are withholding the wages of others to force them to work in the war zone. Any reasonably consistent social criticism must include the perspective of Thai workers in the context of what is happening in Israel-Palestine. This land should not belong to the Palestinian proletarians any more than it should belong to the Thai workers.

Isn't the attempt to skip the “national question” in Israel-Palestine a bit of a kick in the teeth?

Israel has managed to bring about a situation that is unique in the world: the integration of a self-ethnicized (“Jewish”) proletariat into the state against the likewise ethnicized (“Arab”) rest of the proletariat. The Israeli state has organized the accumulation of “national” capital in record time, it has organized the import of a “national” proletariat and has set itself up as the guardian of its existence and reproduction, since it is threatened in its existence by another (“Palestinian”) proletarian fringe. However, if one takes off the glasses of the phantasmagoria of the “state as guarantor of people's existence”, it becomes clear that the Jewish proletariat in Israel represents a kind of spoils of war in the hands of the state.

This is not the case on the side of the Palestinian proletariat, where the dynamics of struggle have retained a certain autonomy and coexist in a complex way with the instrumental logics of their nationalist political framing.

It may seem counterintuitive, but I think we have to consider Hamas as a subcontractor to Israel for the administration of the proletariat in Gaza. As I said before, the latter is ultimately “subordinate” to Israeli national capital. As long as the latter has not made the choice to allow the development of another, “Palestinian” capitalist entity alongside it, the proletariat of Gaza, even if parked, is inscribed in its circuits. This situation, however, cannot do without an outsourced social formation entrusted with regulating the incarcerated – there is no prison without a warden.

What is happening here is not an inter-imperialist war. It is essentially an “internal affair” in which the “national” camps are a smokescreen. There is no proletarian struggle in current

events. The militarization of antagonisms, jointly produced by Hamas and the Israeli ruling class, produces a “resistance” that contains no logic of autonomous proletarian struggle, not even a stammering one.

This is not a war, but an administration of the surplus proletariat with military means equivalent to those of total war, on the part of a democratic, civilized state belonging to the central bloc of accumulation. These thousands of dead seem to me to have a special significance. They paint a terrifying picture of the future – of the coming crises of capitalism.

But a management of the surplus proletariat by carpet bombing, in the way that is considered legitimate by all the central states of the capitalist space, embeds what is currently happening, in my opinion, in a global offensive. In France, this global character is particularly evident: we have entered a phase in which even political formulations are repressed behind humanist slogans – as soon as they might encounter street activities of the dangerous classes. There is no “import” of the conflict. There is a global offensive. In this sense, the struggle for us in France is very much here, against France. We have to betray our own nation, always, whenever it is possible.

2.

What does Hamas have to gain from such a situation?

Before October 7, my vision of the situation was as follows. On one side, an offensive by the colonial far right to both annex the West Bank and take control of the levers of the Israeli state. On the other side, two Palestinian state apparatuses that live exclusively on rents and are only interested in reproducing themselves as such. I had in mind that these powers were on the defensive and that they were preparing above all to accept a loss of control over the population dependent on them in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Among my interlocutors in the West Bank, whether left-wing academics or armed sub-proletarians, everyone told me a few months ago: “Hamas does not support the resistance on the ground. It is thinking of its own interests”.

And indeed, Hamas has not behaved like a fighting organization, but like a military structure, like a state. What is special about its operation, however, is that it inevitably held out the prospect of an Israeli counter-attack, which it would face with imposing inferiority. Hamas is behaving like a state, but without the means of a state, and it is sacrificing part of the interests of part of its apparatus and social base in Gaza in the hope of having more in the future. Many of the leaders will lose their lives in this operation.

The October 7 operation is an astonishing behavior of a ruling class, but in my opinion it can be explained mainly by the contradictions within Hamas itself. It is a hypothesis, but it is not inconceivable that the October 7 operation was conceived by Hamas’ armed wing without much consultation with the political leadership. (It is also conceivable that the extent of the breach in the wall took the planners of the attack themselves by surprise, who perhaps wanted to carry out a kind of suicide operation and had not anticipated such a military collapse by Israel, opening the door to massacres on a large scale).

The Hamas operation is by no means a fanatical millennialist delusion. It is a risky bet, but one

that may pay off. The options in Israel's hands are limited. There is the path of negotiations, the path of regional war and not much in between. But it remains a bet, because it is not certain that the Israeli state and Israeli capital will make the decision to stabilize.

In any case, the "massacre" stage by grave mats is inevitable, but that's another question, it doesn't worry the leaders at all, of course.

You say that Hamas behaves like a state but does not have the means to do so. You also say that it sacrifices some of its interests in order to have more of them later. Can you explain that in more detail?

Quite simply, to be recognized in the context of negotiations. Probably not in terms of a peace agreement, we're not there yet and in reality I don't think either Hamas or Israel have any interest in a comprehensive agreement. But the eradication of Hamas is not a serious consideration from Israel's point of view. By demonstrating its military capabilities, Hamas is trying to prove itself unavoidable in the regional balance of power.

The failure of the resumption of negotiations between Iran and the USA in recent years shows that the time is not ripe for "solutions". For Hamas, as everyone says, it is about blocking the American solution of an Israeli-Saudi agreement. What it has to gain from this is first and foremost to establish itself as an interlocutor for the Arab countries in the region, to further marginalize the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization, which includes Fatah, but also the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)] in the West Bank and Lebanon. It means capturing small markets of Palestinian representation at the expense of the PLO competitor.

Are the interests at stake really that close?

I don't know exactly how to answer this question. Of course, this military operation and the war it triggers must also be seen in a global context in which the capitalist channels of regulation are breaking down.

In my opinion, war is always an attempt to solve the crisis of capitalist valorization as an operation of de-accumulation. But it is also an expression of the shattering of the equilibrium that underlies the relationship between state and capital. It is a moment of crisis in which the control of capital, of total capital, over the state is loosened in favor of the appropriation of the state by certain particular capitalist sectors, even by clans and politicians. The war between capitalists is not just a war between imperialisms. It brings together numerous actors who, in the absence of guardrails, sometimes make risky bets, play a card and try to profit from a reversal of forces. Such a spiral can be observed since the war in Ukraine. The frozen fronts are reawakening: we had Karabakh, now it's Gaza.

The general staffs are advancing, trying out plans, testing resistance and plunging into the water. That's what they spontaneously feel like doing, all the time. What has surprised us in the last two years is how much the guardrails that held them back seem to be jumping.

What is the nature of Hamas' rule over the people of Gaza? How does it secure its power; what profits do its leaders make from it; what links (overt or covert) do they maintain with Israel?

Hamas is a movement that emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Like almost

everywhere in the Arab world, it developed in the 1970s and 1980s within the Palestinian petty bourgeoisie, in the territories and in the diaspora. Since its entry into the struggle against Israel in the wake of the first intifada, this social base has expanded to include more proletarian segments, before the control of Gaza and its militarization fundamentally changed its character. It found itself, as already mentioned, in the position of a state apparatus, with the need to integrate, juggle and mediate between many different and antagonistic categorical interests. And in parallel, since Gaza is not a real state, Hamas has also transformed itself into a militia party, comparable to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

This dual development has a contradictory dimension. I hypothesize that the current war in a way marks the victory of the second logic over the first. The armed arm has triumphed over the state apparatus; the military rentier circuits (from Iran) have triumphed over the civilian rentier circuits (from Qatar).

Hamas is a cross-class movement, which explains its erratic movements. The movement won the 2006 parliamentary elections as the party of order: it promised to put an end to security chaos, silence the guns, fight corruption, build a pro-bourgeois state apparatus that would ensure social order, with social redistribution based on charity. Paradoxically, it appeared as the anti-Intifada party, and the majority of the notables of the two economic centers of the West Bank, Nablus and Hebron, were on its side at the time, but remained aligned with Jordanian economic interests. Hamas won the same parliamentary elections in Gaza, mas there with slogans of resistance and military recruitment aimed at the lumpen proletariat in the refugee camps. Not with the logic of an uprising or a social movement, but with the logic of military patronage. Unlike in the West Bank, there is no commercial and urban bourgeoisie in Gaza.

Interclassism has not exploded since then. Hamas continues to operate with opposing logics of mobilization. The leader of its armed arm, Mohammad Deif, is a kind of mythical icon, a survivor of numerous targeted assassination attempts. He is set up as James Bond to talk to teenagers in refugee camps, while leaders in suits hang out in 5-star hotels in Qatar and eat all sorts of delicacies with ministers and capitalists from the Arab or Turkish world. And when it is the Mohammad Deif fringe that launches an action like the one on October 7, the suit-wearing fringe lets them because it harbors secret hopes of reaping the rewards in the diplomatic corridors.

I'm more cautious about what the comprador bourgeoisie in Gaza City think of this while their villas are being razed to the ground by bombs.

What are the characteristics of the exploitation of the proletarians in Gaza?

I have spent quite a lot of time in the West Bank, but I don't know the Gaza Strip directly. Because of its political and geographical location, glued to a space of intense capitalist accumulation, you could say that Gaza is a big "garbage can" of Israel. But even in the capitalists' dustbins there are social divisions.

Is it basically a kind of ghetto? Specifically, do the proletarians in Gaza have jobs (formal or informal), or must the majority of them be considered surplus to requirements?

"Supernumerary" in the sense that labor in Gaza enables capitalist accumulation almost

nowhere. The capital that circulates in Gaza comes mainly from pensions (and even these are very small pensions): Rents from external aid (Iran and Qatar), rents from monopoly situations (the tunnels). The profits generated do not result from the exploitation of labor by capitalists. The reproduction of the proletarians and the exploitation are two separate processes, as the other would say. The bosses are overwhelmingly small and the state regulates nothing.

Gaza, like many other peripheries of the world, is a space completely outside the capitalist circuits of valorization. There is no “national bourgeoisie” because there is no Gazan capital. Nor is there a “traditional bourgeoisie” as in the West Bank or Jerusalem – old families sitting on dusty commercial and land capital that is still efficient in social relations. Instead, there is a form of new “comprador” bourgeoisie in Gaza that relies on transportation rents. This is not a class in the strict sense, but a social formation that derives massive income from its position as an intermediary in trade with foreign capitalists (as opposed to a bourgeoisie that has an interest in developing the national economy).

Part of this bourgeoisie coincides with the political apparatus of Hamas, since the circulating capital comes largely from a rent of a geopolitical nature, coming from states such as Qatar or Iran. But there are also other rents, for example from border traffic with Egypt. Wealth has been built up around the smuggling tunnels, and this is more of a globalized feudal lord – typically an employer-employee relationship. In 2007, fierce armed clashes broke out in Rafah in the southern part of the Strip between social clan formations and the Hamas politico-military apparatus over the taxation of the movement of goods.

In contrast to the Palestinian Authority (PA), Hamas is not responsible for public services and does not pay wages: these are still paid by the PA. The PA regularly cuts or reduces the salaries of civil servants in Gaza in order to weaken Hamas.

Regularly, and probably partly as a result, there are also “social” mobilizations demanding dignity – typically water, electricity, wages. Hamas suppresses them more or less violently, but with a certain restraint that suggests it is careful not to add fuel to the fire. The current military offensive follows a similar episode that took place in the summer. It is easy to imagine that there is a connection, or at least a logic, linking these two types of events.

The protest against the administering Hamas and the support for the fighting Hamas are by no means antagonistic. The first attacks your dignity, while the second avenges it. Without the Hamas fighters, the Hamas manager in Gaza would probably have to deal with larger protests.

You say that you “know” the West Bank better than Gaza. Are there big differences between these two areas or are they two versions of the same logic?

Gaza has long been the “trash can” of excess people I mentioned above. A tiny area into which an influx of refugees was driven in 1947-1948, swamping the local, largely peasant population. There are no resources there. In the West Bank the class structure is different, there are towns and notables. And there are agricultural and water resources that Israel claims for itself. Wages are twice as high, there are some industries based on relative integration between the PA comprador class and Israeli capital. Fatah, which governs the cities, is a party that no longer has any social cohesion. In 2006, it lost the elections to Hamas. In 2007, it undertook an Israeli and US-backed coup to retain the levers of public power in the



cities of the West Bank and “left” Gaza to Hamas. Since then, he has had no legitimacy based on any form of democratic process. His power is based on cooperation with Israel, hidden behind hollow-sounding nationalist rhetoric. He governs separate enclaves that are increasingly surrounded by settlements and regularly invaded by the Israeli army. As for the proletariat in the West Bank, it is more integrated into Israeli capital than that in Gaza. Many Palestinian workers from the West Bank work legally or illegally on Israeli territory or in the settlements. They have economic ties to the 1948 Palestinians who are endowed with Israeli citizenship; they often speak Hebrew.

What is currently happening in the West Bank? What is Fatah doing? Are there social or political forces of a more or less proletarian nature that could become stronger at the moment of crisis?

The Gaza Strip seems lost to me at the moment as far as the possibilities for proletarian activity are concerned. The situation is different in the cities of the West Bank, where the internal Palestinian struggle for political control has been progressing for years with autonomous manifestations of class struggle. Social control is jointly guaranteed by a security apparatus maintained by comprador capitalists dependent on Israel and urban baronies linked to Jordan. The cohesion of this class continues to disintegrate, Fatah no longer regulates anything and everyone is trying to secure their fiefdom at the expense of the others. The expected event to sort all this out was the death of the paranoid dinosaur Mahmoud Abbas, but things are bound to accelerate.

Hamas has been dormant in the West Bank for fifteen years. No public or direct military activity. It maintains loyalties, but discreetly. The armed groups that have re-emerged in the north (Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem) have no links with it. This passivity gave the impression that Hamas had given its blessing to the situation and did not want to break the status quo. Within the armed groups in the refugee camps, this gave it a bad reputation: it was the flip side of Fatah, just muzzlers, political interests that differed from those of the people. And then this operation: it clearly changes the situation in terms of perception. Whether we like it or not, the emblem will be damn well enhanced. You can already see the Hamas flag waving everywhere at the demonstrations, which was unimaginable a month ago. Will Hamas directly challenge the PA for power in the West Bank? That is unlikely, as its activities are closely monitored not only by the PA but also by Israel, and the Palestinian enclaves in the West Bank do not form a contiguous territory, so it cannot be held militarily without negotiating the matter with the Israeli army. But it can change its strategy and support the activities of armed groups in one way or another.

Be that as it may, things are bound to move. The PA will find it difficult to maintain its security sovereignty. The coherence of the political-security class will be severely tested.

The army and the settlers have launched a series of attacks in the West Bank parallel to the offensive in Gaza. This offensive will intensify, with a series of massacres that are more limited than in Gaza, but probably also more “self-organized”.

However, I am somewhat excited that the lead shell of oppression and gridlock that the PA has created over the last 15-20 years is being swept away, and that the collapse of the police will allow for the social explosion that has been expected for years. Class relations in the West

Bank are characterized by extraordinary violence. The bourgeoisie in the West Bank has long benefited from the situation of cooperation with Israel, it has gorged itself, it would be good if it tensed its ass a little.

For some time now there have been social protests in Israel against Netanyahu and his judicial reform in particular. What consequences (if any) do these struggles have in the current situation? To what extent does the “civil” resistance of the Israeli population (e.g. the recent struggles against judicial reform) express such aspirations?

The war also seems to me to be a symptom of the loss of coherence of the capitalist class; and at the same time this loss of coherence is masked by military unity. The Israeli military collapse on October 7 seems to stem largely from the struggle that is sweeping the Israeli capitalist class and has for the first time reached the institution of the military. The struggle in recent months has been intense and has spilled out into the streets. The old Israel, Ashkenazi, bourgeois, secular and military, accumulating vertically in Tel Aviv, met the ruling extreme right, Sephardic, revanchist and accumulating horizontally in the hills of the West Bank. But nothing proletarian ever spilled over from these demonstrations. Worse still: nothing democratic, in the “civil” sense, as you call it. The proletariat in Israel, which nevertheless suffers from a high level of exploitation, is silenced by its existential integration into the military state.

Warlike national unity temporarily brings this struggle under the carpet within the Israeli ruling class: to drown Gaza under a carpet of bombs, everyone agrees; and to build a lead mat of security, too. Since the general mobilization, the hunt for the enemy within has begun. It concerns the handful of leftists that still exist, but also and above all the Muslim proletariat (the Palestinians of 1948), where every little movement of solidarity with the victims of the indiscriminate bombings is being hunted down. What will happen in a few months? Will the war lead to an alignment of the ruling class with the settler party? The latter, while despised by the majority of the bourgeoisie for its religious backwardness, is nonetheless most in tune with a mobilization aimed at hunting down Arabs that is unlikely to end.

3.

Do you think that the purely colonial analytical grid is effective in defining relations between Israel and the Palestinian proletariat?

Yes and no, obviously.

We are in a situation that is less about the exploitation of an indigenous labor force and more about the management of a surplus proletarian population, on a scale that is unique within the capitalist centers of accumulation. For every worker with a labor contract in Israel, there is another held in one of the large gated suburbs that make up the settlement centers under Palestinian jurisdiction: the Gaza Strip and the West Bank cities. These are almost five million proletarians parked just a few kilometers from Tel Aviv, invisible, living off the daily sale of their labor and guarded by soldiers so they don't get out of their cages.

This great confinement, this operation of separation between useful proletarians and surplus proletarians on an ethno-religious basis, begins at the same time as the beginning of the peace process, which is in fact a process of externalizing the social control of the surplus.

Previously, in the 1970s and 1980s, Palestinians were massively employed by Israeli capital.

In this sense, the term “colonial” is somewhat inappropriate to describe the social relationship that has prevailed in Israel-Palestine since the early 1990s. Moreover, it has the disadvantage of establishing an opposition between two national formations that are in fact produced and reproduced together. Palestinian and Israeli proletarians are segmentations of one and the same whole. What has been taking place since October 7 must be seen as a negotiation through violence between the subcontractor from Gaza and his Israeli employer. In this sense, it must be clearly distinguished from the fighting activity of the Palestinian proletarians, which the Hamas and PA subcontractors face on the front line. It has never stopped, but the nationalist embrace will deal it a heavy blow, at least in Gaza.

All moral considerations aside, the term “resistance”, which refers to the colonial imagination, seems to me inappropriate to describe the October 7 military operation: Hamas's interests are not those of the proletarians, they are not those – to use the common vocabulary – of the “Palestinian people”. The proletarians in Gaza, regardless of the outcome of these negotiations, will be the big victims – they already are. If Israel grows wings to get rid of its subcontractor, that would mean that Israel grows wings to get rid of its surplus proletarians in Gaza. You can't have one without the other.

On the other hand, I also believe that we cannot do without an analytical grid based on the colonial.

Israel inherits this European logic, which consists of “animalizing” the workforce on the basis of racial criteria and drawing a barrier between the civilized and pre-civilized world. This paradigm is operating at full speed in Israel, and in a very deliberate way. The people of Gaza are currently being massacred according to this logic: They are being drowned in bombs with no political goal other than to “calm them down” and remind them of the hierarchy that separates groups of people in this region of the world. A dog bites, you shoot the pack.

It must be remembered that these boundaries between civilization and animal are fluid. They were and are also effective within Israeli Jewish citizenship. Arab (Mizrahis) or Ethiopian (Fallashas) Jews have long been on the wrong side of the fence, representing a kind of indigenous proxy used to reassure other locals.

The colonial, as a legacy of the colonial period proper, generates a kind of “drive” economy around which the construction of social categories is entwined – and this, by the way, is only the coarsened image of what happens in the whole “fortress” formed by the core countries of capitalist accumulation, as can be seen in the immediate transposition of the “civilizational war” to France.

The current dynamic and its logic of keeping the surplus proletarians in reserve carries with it a flood of affects built on humiliation. Faced with the impossibility of intervening collectively in social relations, powerlessness produces a logic of double resentment: the search for recognition on the one hand, revenge on the other.

Because they have no bourgeoisie to rely on, because they have no proletariat to exploit themselves, politicians like those of Hamas must rely on the exploitation of these affects, of which they become the embodiment – for lack of something better, for lack of something

more.

To come back to Israel: Given that capitalist accumulation is largely based on the permanent “war economy” + the land grab + the exploitation of the more or less formal Palestinian proletariat, must any “solution” (e.g. “two-state solution”) be seen as decidedly impossible?

When Israel wanted to get rid of the management of the Palestinian labor force in the territories from the 1990s onwards, it subcontracted this task to a subcontractor, the Palestinian Authority. But Israel is not abiding by the contract, which was supposed to lead to a kind of symbolic sovereignty. It mistreats its subcontractor. As a result, the subcontractor revolts: the second intifada ensues, in which a struggle by the PA against its employer is mixed with an all-round proletarian struggle against Israel and the subcontractor, which, however, proves to be stifled by the triangulation. At the end of this historical sequence, the PA subcontractors split. One ill-treated but compliant subcontractor in the West Bank; another ill-treated but mercurial subcontractor in Gaza. Hamas may be treated as an enemy, but the fact is that Israel cannot do without subcontractors in this context.

Let us briefly return to this process and its failure. Why didn't the capitalists seize the “peace” that consisted of supporting a Palestinian “national process” in Gaza and the West Bank? What fell into their laps at the time was the opening of a regional market with surrounding countries, the possibility of investment in countries with cheap labor. It would have been enough to give the Authority the attributes of a rogue state, financed to the hilt by outside donors, which would have remained a captive market. The answer to this question is not clear to me. I put forward two hypotheses. The first is the weight of “military” capital supported by the military rent that flows from the US to Israel. This military capitalism, linked to the high-tech sector, is internationalized over the head of the regional market. The second hypothesis sees the failure of the peace process as part of the great catastrophe that was the US attempt to reshape the Middle East in the 2000s. Expecting capital flows in the region to be liquefied by military action, Israel would have held on before imagining that it could have the shortfall without having to cede anything to the authorities in the Palestinian reserves. This continued for almost twenty years. In this context, even the prospect of opening new markets in the Arab world (the so-called Abraham Accord and new prospects for a Pax americana with Saudi Arabia) eventually emerged, and it is arguably this situation that has just broken down. What was shown on October 7 is that the butter-and-bread equation is not tenable: one will have to negotiate with the Palestinian jailers of the Palestinian reserves to contain the ghetto reserves formed on their territory, or get rid of them, which would clearly open a new page in the history of capitalist violence in the countries of the central accumulation bloc. This is not impossible. It just makes you shudder.

Is the idea of the “Palestinian people” to bridge social divisions any less operative, even within the dominated classes?

In my opinion, social criticism is above all the production of categories that make it possible to think of antagonisms in terms of social contradictions. In a context like the Israeli-Palestinian one, this may seem like an operation that twists the circulating subjective categories, on the basis of which the effects of struggle are constructed, about what is perceived as identity.

The idea of the “Palestinian people” as a counter-category to “Israel” is of course effective in

many places: on identity papers and in most people's minds, also as a mode of legitimization for proletarian struggles.

But the ethnicization of social relations has a history that is first and foremost the history of the ruling classes: it is the history of the formation of a capitalist Jewish bourgeoisie that wipes out an Arab feudal Marxist bourgeoisie; the fusion of this bourgeoisie with a military state, and so on. The ethnicization of social relations has a history that is first and foremost the history of the ruling classes. The proletarians are drawn into this ethnicization of antagonisms within the ruling class.

One must never lose sight of the fact that the "Palestinian struggle", including that waged under the banner of Hamas, must be read first and foremost as a struggle waged by the Arab ruling social classes – or by those who aspire to invest in them – for their integration into Israeli capital. The interests of the proletarians, sometimes to find themselves under the banner of national struggle, are ultimately at odds with those of their bourgeoisie.

I believe that solidarity is required not with the "Palestinian resistance", but with the struggles of the proletarians against the conditions of existence imposed on them. The proletarians are fighting under the flags that are available to them. We should not look at the flag, but at the struggles themselves. A Palestinian flag and even a Fatah or Hamas flag are potentially battle standards that elude political managers depending on the context. Incidentally, one should not shit on Hamas because they are Islamists, but because they are an apparatus for looking after the proletariat, a state in the making.

It should be noted that this social criticism can sometimes seem incredibly cold and far removed from the experience of a struggle that mobilizes other categories. The hat I put on to talk about cold dialectical materialism is not the same as when the situation unfolds before my eyes, with its violence, its struggles and its subjectivity.

Doesn't a materialist critique in such an identification-laden context run the risk of appearing too detached?

It seems to me that in such a context, the challenge is not to hold a position, but a point of view, a method. A revolutionary view consists first and foremost of not allowing oneself to be blinded by the independent moral categories used by the left. I see two that constantly threaten to crush dialectically oriented thinking in conversations at the moment.

The first is the knee-jerk lament along the lines of "the proletariat is not what you want it to be": anti-Semitic Muslim proletarians, racist Jewish proletarians. Apart from the fact that this thinking – which consists of viewing the proletarian's interiority from an intellectual position – is inherently bourgeois, it is particularly inappropriate in a situation that is that of an antagonism in which no form of proletarian autonomy manifests itself.

What is currently unfolding is a logic of embracing the proletariat on the one hand and the sheer massacre of surplus proletarians on the other. So some will mourn the good old days when Palestinian political formations (and thus, it is assumed, the people themselves) were leftist. It seems to me that this is stupid. The ideology of the political groupings is secondary once one assumes that they are primarily fighting for their leaders to establish and reproduce themselves as the ruling class. As far as methods are concerned, I would just like to remind

you that it was, for example, a commando of the DFLP [Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine], an ideologically radical left-wing (and linked to elements of the Israeli radical left) Palestinian formation, that carried out the massacre of 22 children in a school in Ma'alot in 1974.

A second problematic reflex is to incorporate metaphysical thinking into the analysis. This metaphysical thinking is contained in the idea of repetition, which freezes and baffles. It is at work in the elaborations around the “massacre of the Jews”; but also around the “Palestinian tragedy”. These elaborations, which perhaps develop autonomously in the depths of the psyche, are nonetheless pure products of the way in which bourgeois thought shifts social relations into the heaven of ideas.

Let us leave aside the stories of farce and tragedy: history does not repeat itself: the antagonisms that unfold are, above all, always current antagonisms.

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